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Learning Logs In Foreign Language Study: Student Views On Their Usefulness For Learner Autonomy

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Abstract. Diaries and logs have been used in a number of different learning contexts. In completing diaries and logs for foreign language classes, students are asked to record the activities that they do to study, practice and/or improve their ability in the target language. In the case of a degree in Modern Languages and Translation at a university in central Spain a variety of options were recently offered to 76 students: a daily log, a weekly summary, or a weekly report on research into language learning strategies. This paper discusses the variations proposed and it reports the students' choices, their opinions of the usefulness of the overall activity and their impressions of whether the activity helped them to increase certain aspects of learner autonomy. The majority of the students opted to complete a daily log, and a questionnaire revealed that they were generally positive about the activity overall and its effectiveness in terms of learner autonomy.
Key words: Diaries; journals; learning logs; autonomy; learning strategies; out-of-classroom learning; student satisfaction.

[es] Diarios de aprendizaje en el estudio de los idiomas extranjeros: opiniones de alumnos acerca de su utilidad para la autonomía de los aprendices

Resumen. Se han empleado diarios en una variedad de contextos de aprendizaje. Para realizar un diario en una clase de idioma extranjero, los alumnos anotan las actividades que realizan para estudiar, practicar, y/o mejorar su capacidad en la lengua meta. En el caso de un grado en Lenguas Modernas y Traducción ofertado en una universidad en el centro peninsular, 76 estudiantes tuvieron la opción de hacer un diario, un resumen semanal o un informe semanal acerca de sus búsquedas bibliográficas en cuanto a estrategias de aprendizaje. El presente artículo explica esas opciones e informa sobre las elecciones de los estudiantes, sus opiniones acerca de la utilidad de la actividad en general y sus impresiones de si la actividad les ayudó a incrementar ciertos aspectos de la autonomía en el aprendizaje. La mayoría de los estudiantes optaron por hacer un diario con anotaciones breves, y un cuestionario reveló que, por lo general, opinaron de forma positiva acerca de la actividad en global y su eficacia en cuanto a la autonomía en el aprendizaje.
Palabras clave: diarios; autonomía; estrategias de aprendizaje; aprendizaje fuera del aula; satisfacción de los alumnos.

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[fr] Journaux d'apprentissage pour l'étude des langues étrangères : Opinions des étudiants sur son utilité pour l'autonomie des apprenants

Résumé. Les journaux d'apprentissage sont employés dans différents contextes d'enseignement. Pour réaliser un journal comme partie d'un cours de langue étrangère, les étudiants écrivent les activités qu'ils font pour étudier, pratiquer et/ou améliorer sa capacité dans la langue qu'ils étudient. Dans le cas d'un programme de licence en Langues Modernes et Traduction qui est offert dans une université de la région du centre de l'Espagne, le professeur a donné la possibilité aux 76 étudiants de faire un journal quotidien avec des notes brèves, un résumé de la semaine, ou un bilan court de la semaine avec des renseignements obtenus sur les stratégies d'apprentissage. Le présent travail présente les trois options et explique les choix des étudiants, ses opinions sur l'utilité de l'activité en général et sus impressions sur si l'activité leurs a aidé augmenter certains aspects de l'autonomie des apprenants. La plupart des étudiants ont choisi faire un journal quotidien, et les résultats d'une enquête ont révélé qu'ils avaient une opinion positive en général vers l'activité et son effectivité pour l'autonomie des apprenants.
Mots clés: journaux; l'autonomie; stratégies d'apprentissage; l'apprentissage hors de la salle de classe; satisfaction des étudiants

Summary: 1. Introduction. 2. Literature review. 3. Hypotheses. 4. Method. 4.1. Participants and activities. 4.2. Procedure. 5. Results. 5.1. Log options selected. 5.2. Overall satisfaction. 5.3. Course goals. 5.4. Negative attitudes. 6. Discussion. 7. Conclusion. 8. Bibliography. Appendix 1. Appendix 2. Appendix 3. Appendix 4.

1. Introduction

Diaries and journals have been used in a number of different learning contexts for several decades. In keeping learning diaries and journals, students are typically asked to write about different aspects of their learning experience depending on the focus of the activity, but the main objective is often to make learning more personal and reflective. In the case of foreign language learning and teaching, Bailey & Ochsner (1983, 189) indicate that diaries are first person descriptions that record the writer's experience learning or teaching a second language including "affective factors, language learning strategies, and his own perceptions".

This article discusses the use of learning logs, a shorter version of journals and diaries designed to facilitate completion on the part of the students by only requiring brief notations of up to 150 words per day. In general, student attitudes towards this activity have been positive (Absalom & De Saint Léger, 2011; Litzler, 2014a). However, because some students have been reticent about doing it (Litzler 2014a, b), two alternatives were offered to a group of 76 students in order to determine if they would opt for the new possibilities, if they liked the activity overall, and if they felt that it had helped them in achieving the course objectives related to autonomy and learning strategies, both areas considered to be of relevance in today's world of lifelong learning (Benson, 2008; Oxford, 2011). In this sense, the activity was modified compared to earlier years with a view towards accommodating different learning styles and preferences. The students' choices and opinions about

the usefulness of completing logs can shed light on the potentially motivating or demotivating effect of the activity on language learning. The results of this study are of interest to language teachers seeking ways to stimulate students to becoming more independent as learners.

2. Literature review

Learning journals, diaries and logs have been used for several decades in a variety of learning contexts such as psychology (Cisero, 2006), business (Pavlovich, Collins & Jones, 2007), education (Blaschke & Brindley, 2010), and foreign language learning and teaching (Bailey, 1991). According to Moon (2003, 2), they tend to serve different purposes: learning journals are for "making explicit and recording the learning that occurs", reflective diaries are related to "reflection on an experience", and logs are "a record of events that have happened". Foreign language classes can take full advantage of all three options. Brown (1985, in Curtis & Bailey, 2009, 74), for instance, explained to students learning Spanish that their journals would help them to understand themselves and the learning experience better and the activity would also help them to learn about the process of language learning.

In doing journals for foreign language classes, students can be asked to write about their in-class and/or out-of-class activities along with their reactions to them. For example, Ellis (1989, 252-253) asked his two learners of German to record information on "their reactions to the course, their teachers, their fellow students, and any other factors which they considered having an effect on their language learning". Nevertheless, the individual assignments can vary depending on the objectives of each course. Studies involving learning diaries tend not to report a required length or number of entries, but they often provide an indication of the length of the course in which they are used. The requirement in these cases can vary from daily entries limited to one week, as in Hyland (2004), to an unstated number of entries throughout an entire academic year (Debreli, 2011). Typically, a fair amount of writing appears to be involved. Exceptions to this trend are Halbach (2000), Absalom & De Saint Léger (2011) and Litzler (2014a, b), all of which involve short entries of between 30-100 words.

Little work has focused on student receptiveness to writing learning journals (Absalom & De Saint Léger, 2011; Litzler, 2014b). Nevertheless, studies sometimes mention some degree of student satisfaction and/or dissatisfaction in passing (see Litzler, 2014b, for a discussion). In the case of a degree program in Modern Languages and Translation at a university in central Spain, students are frequently asked to complete a learning log as part of their first year English classes but the experience of the instructors and professors has shown that there is some reluctance to doing the activity, with the consequence of a slight demotivation in language learning. One of the objectives of this study is to determine whether students are receptive to a variation in format; a second one is to ascertain their opinion regarding the activity as a whole.

At the same time, a third objective of this study is to look at students' impressions of whether the use of a learning log (or alternative exercise) increases different aspects of autonomy in working with the foreign language, which were included in

the objectives of the course in which the students were enrolled. The overall view of autonomy assumed in this paper is the "ability to take charge of one's own learning" (Holec, 1981, 3), but our understanding is that learners need some guidance in starting to do so, instead of having an innate capacity to work on their own, an issue commented in the literature on this area of academic research (for example, Smith, 2003, 2008), especially if they have spent years in an educational system that encourages dependence on the instructor. In this sense, students are encouraged to determine the areas of the language on which they need to improve and to select and experiment with different ways to practice them outside the classroom as well as to observe their progress, similar to Holec's (1981) notions of fixing objectives, selection of methods and monitoring. In practicing the language in different ways and attempting new methods of working on a day-to-day basis, they try out new strategies for language learning. Our understanding of the concept of strategies here is a broad one, taken from (Oxford, 2003, 2; Scarcella & Oxford, 1992, 63); for us they entail "specific actions, behaviors, steps, or techniques –such as seeking out conversation partners, or giving oneself encouragement to tackle a difficult language task– used by students to enhance their own learning". The findings of this study can provide an idea of the potentially motivating or demotivating effect of the activity on practicing the language outside the classroom.

3. Hypotheses

It can be expected that the students will be receptive to doing the other options of the log activity because they require less day-to-day work, which some students have reported to find "tedious" and "boring" (Absalom & De Saint Léger, 2011, 204; Cisero, 2006, 233; Litzler, 2014b, 1532-1533). It can also be expected that the students will generally have a positive opinion about the logs, but there will continue to be a portion of the group who do not like them as they are not accustomed to reporting on what they do, be it in a weekly summary or in a daily log table (Litzler, 2014b, 1533). The log activities will also foreseeably be viewed in a positive light in terms of assisting the students to increase their learner autonomy as they are encouraged in class time to experiment with new ways of working with the target language.

4. Method

4.1. Participants and activities

A total of 76 students in the Modern Languages and Translation degree program at the university in question took part in this study. They were all enrolled in a required English language course offered in the first semester of the first year of the program. Acceptance into the program is relatively competitive as students must obtain a comparatively high mark on their university entrance exam in relation to other degree programs, such as English Studies or Primary School Education. Three of the objectives of the language course listed on the syllabus are for students to understand themselves better as language learners, to assist the learners in discovering ways of

monitoring language learning, and to increase learner autonomy. For this reason, they are assigned to keep a learning log during the semester.

In the initial classes, the instructor explained the log activity to the students, indicating that they should fill in a chart with their weekly objectives and their daily activities related to improving their English, with the idea that the log could help them discover new ways of learning and the best ways for them to learn. A one-page weekly grid was provided to the students so that they could note down briefly the dates that they practiced English, the materials used, the type of activity done, and comments on what they found to be difficult or easy, why that was the case, and what they felt they needed to do in the future (Appendix 1). They were expected to complete the log on a weekly basis. Further information on this activity can be found in Litzler (2014a).

Two options, apart from the daily grid for recording their activities, were offered for the first time (Appendix 2). The first of the alternatives involved writing a weekly prose summary of the work done to improve English, including a description of new strategies attempted that week, their impressions of the strategies, and their observed progress in English. This option was offered for those students who prefer not to report on their activities on an everyday basis because they can find doing so to be "tedious" or "boring," as indicated in section 3 above. The second alternative did not entail any reporting of work completed in relation to English. Instead, it required students to do weekly research into learning strategies on specific areas of the foreign language, such as one of the four skills, and to submit a summary of the information found along with impressions as to whether the strategies might work or not in the case of the particular student. This option was provided in response to past findings that some learners are reticent to reporting their independent work to their instructors (Litzler, 2014b, 1533).

4.2. Procedure

When the students submitted their final exercises at the end of the semester, a count was made of the number who had selected each of the different options to determine the student preferences as revealed through their actual choices. The students also completed a brief questionnaire in Spanish, their native language, on the final day of class. Four of the questions were closed and two of them were open response questions (Appendix 3). The first question asked the students to rate the activity following the same scale that is used in the Spanish educational system for student marks (1-10); this value served as an overall indication of their satisfaction with the activity. Three yes/no questions were aimed at determining whether the students felt the activity had helped them in achieving the course goals related to learner autonomy mentioned in section 4.1 above. Finally, the two open questions were designed to confirm the responses to the prior questions and to obtain additional information that the students might want to include.

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the responses to the closed questions.[3] In order to confirm the results obtained in the initial closed question about satisfaction, the individual comments from the open questions were sorted into

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[3]   The statistical analyses were performed using SPSS 22 thanks to a license from the University of Valencia.

groups corresponding to the student attitude reflected: 1) negative; 2) negative with some recognition of a positive aspect; 3) positive with some indication of a negative aspect; and 4) positive. An example of a comment that was assigned the value of 2 is "I think the logs are useful during the first two or three weeks. But then they become repetitive, and they make you do activities that before were done voluntarily, so these things turn to be boring and tiring. I don't think logs are useful" (student 3-7). Once assigned to an overall attitude category, the different comments were examined more closely using the "card sort technique" for working with qualitative data developed by Lincoln & Guba (1985) and reported in Nunan & Bailey (2009, 424).

In addition, five students were interviewed in the language of their choice (Spanish or English) after the semester had finished and the final marks had been assigned. They were selected because of their choice in log option, their final mark for the course and their availability for consultation. Two of them had opted to do a weekly summary, while the other three had used the table for recording daily activities; four of the students had obtained high marks (8, 8, 8.5 and 9), but the other student had failed the course (4.5 out of 10). No other students who had obtained relatively low marks were available for consultation. The objective of the interviews, which were recorded and transcribed for analysis, was to determine the reasons why the students had opted for the format they had done with a view towards improving the exercise in the future.

5. Results

5.1. Log options selected

A total of 71 students opted to do the weekly log table, and 5 of them wrote a summary of their weekly work, but no one chose to do the research option. Hence, the first hypothesis indicated in section 3 above has not been confirmed as the students were not highly receptive to doing the other types of activities. Tables 1 and 2 below reveal a variety of reasons why the students interviewed made their choices. It is interesting to note here that the students interviewed actually contradicted each other in terms of the option that they felt was easier and the degree of detail that was required in each exercise. This finding provides support for offering different types of learning activities in order to accommodate different types of learning styles and preferences (Felder & Henriques, 1995). It is also worth pointing out that a number of these reasons relate direct to metacognitive strategies (Oxford, 2011).

Reasons for writing a weekly summary	Student number; final student mark
It is less tiring	1; 8
I like writing	2; 8
It allowed me to actually practice writing	2; 8
I like to actually write a detailed summary	2; 8

Table 1. Reasons for doing the weekly summary

Reasons for using the weekly log table	Student number; final student mark
It is easier to fill in (the table)	3; 8.5
It is more specific	3; 8.5
It is more comfortable	3; 8.5
It forces me to look for more options for practicing English	3; 8.5
It is more focused and more specific	4; 9
It helped me to be aware of what I was doing well and what I was not learning	4; 9
I had to practice a little every day	5; 4.5
I had to look for different ways to practice English	5; 4.5

Table 2. Reasons for doing the weekly log table

5.2. Overall satisfaction

In terms of the students' overall evaluation of the log activity, Figure 1 shows the percentages of participants who ranked the log activity for each value from 1-10. Because one student did not answer the question (T=75), the results fall short of 100%. While values as low as 1 and 2 do exist, many of the responses were towards the higher end of the scale.
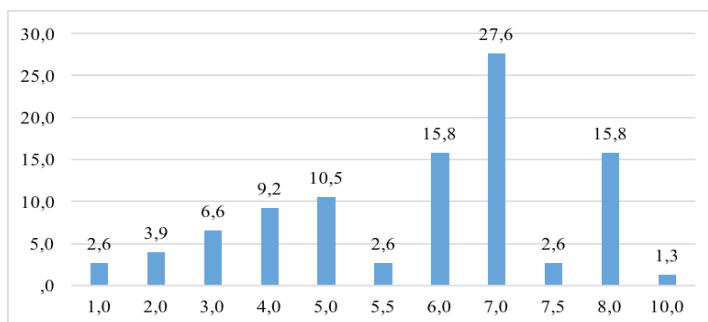

Figure 1. Overall satisfaction from 1 to 10

The scores for this same question were assigned to three groups based on quartile. In this case, Group 1 represents the students who indicated a low level of satisfaction, Group 3 represents the students with a high level of satisfaction and Group 2 are the students in the middle of these two extremes. The final distribution is indicated in Table 3. The result is a larger number of students in the top quartile compared to the lower and intermediate groups, but the lower quartile must not be ignored and will be discussed below.

Group	Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage
1 – Low satisfaction (0-25%)	25	32.9	33.3
2 – Intermediate satisfaction (26-74%)	14	18.4	18.7
3 – High satisfaction (75-100%)	36	47.4	48.0
Total	75	98.7	100.0

Table 3. Overall satisfaction according to quartile. Note: Percentage and valid percentage vary because one student did not respond to question 1 and could, hence, not be assigned to any of the groups (T=75)

In addition to the students' overall numerical scoring of the activity in question 1, the responses to the open questions were converted into numerical values from 1-4, as described above. The positive tendency in attitudes alongside the existence of negative opinions observed up to this point is confirmed, as seen in Figure 2. The sum of the categories for positive comments and positive comments with some indication of a negative aspect comes to 60.6% of the total. It can, therefore, be stated that the second expectation in section 3 above is confirmed: the majority of the students saw the activity in a favorable light but there existed a substantial portion of discontented participants. As a result, the different options offered did not appear to resolve the problem of student reticence towards the activity, meaning that the potential for some demotivation continues to exist.
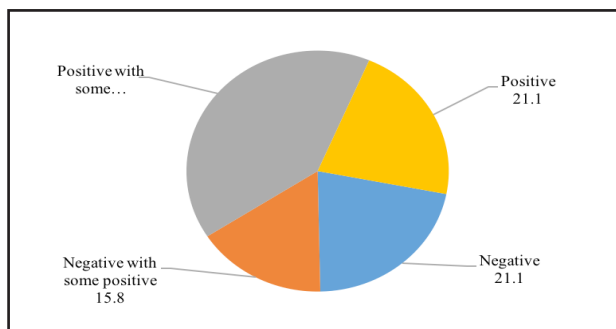

Figure 2. Numerical values for the responses to the open questions

5.3. Course goals

With regards to the more specific closed questions, Table 4 summarizes the responses along with their corresponding percentages. These results also tended towards positive in all three cases. It is important to highlight that many of the students' comments were simply restatements of the original questions in which the participants either affirmed or negated their application to their own situation.

Responses of this type are not considered any further in this discussion. In terms of the findings in Table 4 below, it must be noted that three times more positive responses were obtained than negative ones for Question 3, meaning that a large majority of the students felt that the logs helped them to find new ways of working with the target language, a clear indication of potential for increased autonomy and experimentation with strategy use in the broad sense of the word. The responses to the open questions that went beyond restatements support this finding. For example, seven students indicated that doing the log "forced" them to look for new things to do with English, a finding also reported in Connor-Greene (2000, 45) and Litzler (2014b, 1531) but listed in the latter study under the category of external motivation. This finding is positive in itself, as students can be expected to benefit from seeking out new ways of practicing with the target language. Another idea mentioned by three students is the fact that they consulted with each other to get ideas on how to learn, thanks to the log assignment. Two students indicated that, by doing a log, they realized that certain daily activities with English, such as watching television in the target language, could be beneficial in more ways than they had originally thought, a notion that is now backed by empirical research (Sockett, 2014), and one which can be expected to boost intrinsic motivation (Dörnyei, 2005; Noels, 2003).

Question	Total responses		Percentages	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Question 2. The learning log helped me to be more independent in studying/improving my level of English.	46	30	60.5	39.5
Question 3. The log has helped me to discover new ways to study/improve/practice English.	57	19	75	25
Question 4. The log has helped me to better understand how I study/improve my level of the foreign language.	41	35	53.9	46.1

Table 4. Yes/No question responses and percentages

The results for the other two questions also show a positive attitude on the part of the students. It can, therefore, be concluded that the students agreed that the activity helped them to achieve these course objectives related to learner autonomy, the third hypothesis above. The comments related to Question 4 mentioned different aspects of self-awareness, all of which fall under the category of metacognitive strategies for language learning (Oxford, 2011): becoming aware of which aspects of English the students needed to focus on more (3 comments), learning how to organize their time working with English (5 comments), and seeing their progress or lack thereof (4 comments). Few comments relate to the question on independence. The responses mentioned the obligation to work, when normally the student would not have done so, relating this idea directly to the concept of independence (3 comments), and the fact that the log helped the students who were "more dependent on the teacher" in order to "have more initiative and work towards improving on our own" (1 comment) (student 1-14).

5.4 Negative attitudes

While all of the findings reported up to this point reveal a generally positive response on the part of the students, a calculation of the variation in the numerical answers reveals that this attitude was not always so solid, as seen in Table 5.

The larger values of variation observed for Question 1 and for the comments are a reminder that some students were not happy with the log activity. Fifteen of the student comments revealing a negative attitude and fourteen of the students who had positive comments while mentioning something negative indicate that the activity is "tedious" or "time consuming" because they found it repetitive having to note down what they did with English every day, a finding which confirms the studies mentioned in section 4.1 above. Eight of the students with a negative attitude and two students with a positive opinion stated that they had learned "nothing new" from doing a log, and seven of the students with a negative overall response to the activity and one positive student suggested that it was demotivating to have to report so often on what they did. These reactions are a sign of eroding motivation, which can be detrimental to learning (Dörnyei, 2001), so it is of interest to find a way to limit or prevent these attitudes from arising must be found. Offering the students a variety of options for the learning log assignment does not appear to be the solution.

	N	Mean	Standard deviation	Variation
Satisfaction according to question 1	75	5,893	1,9036	3,624
2. The learning log helped me to be more independent in studying/improving my level of English.	76	,61	,492	,242
3. The log has helped me to discover new ways to study/improve/practice English.	76	,75	,436	,190
4. The log has helped me to better understand how I study/improve my level of the foreign language.	76	,54	,502	,252
Attitude based on the comments	74	2,62	1,056	1,115

Table 5. General descriptive statistics. Note: N is the number of responses to the questions, Mean is the Mean of the results (it varies as a function of the min., max., and sum), and the Standard Deviation and Variation indicate the variation of the responses (they vary according to the min., max., sum and mean)

The remainder of the negative comments tended to be too general to glean much information from them or they mentioned information reported by only one individual. For example, one student indicated that "a person who is not autonomous already is not going to learn how to be so now" (student 1-7), a reflection of discussion in academic circles on learner autonomy and learner training as mentioned above, and another stated "I think I was not able to take advantage of the learning log system because I am not used to reporting everything that I do to improve my English"

(student 1-6). A different person indicated that he or she felt that the students invented what to write in the logs (student 2-6), an approach that instructors need to be consider in reading and commenting on them. The remainder of the issues reported by the students who generally have a positive view of the activity were similar; they were general or individual, as in "I already am a person who learns by himself" (student 1-24).

In terms of the responses to the second open question on how to improve the activity in the future, a large number of students did not provide any suggestions or they made comments completely unrelated to doing logs, such as "maybe a good idea would be to do debates in class so that all of us can talk" (student 2-23). The most frequent response type (21 comments) revealed that the students would rather the instructor gave the students information directly on learning strategies and another ten comments indicated that they would prefer to have to do exercises that the teacher assigns instead of doing a log, both positions that suggest resistance to a change in the educational model aimed at moving away from teacher control in favor of increased student responsibility in learning, a key notion in learner autonomy (Benson, 2011; Holec, 1981). A further six students suggested making the activity voluntary and five of them said that it should be done less often, both suggestions worthy of consideration in planning future courses that use logs.

6. Discussion

The small number of students who opted to write a summary of their work related to English as opposed to filling in the log table was surprising. Given student reticence in the past to reporting work done with the target language on a daily basis, more students were expected to prefer this freer format. At the same time, the variety of reasons offered by the three students who used the table revealed a number of factors that are likely be shared by many of the remaining members of the group, such as their feeling forced (in a motivating way) to look for different ways to work with the language on a frequent basis. These findings are positive in terms of helping students to learn the foreign language on their own since they relate to metacognitive strategies (Oxford, 2011).

While students in the past have been reticent to doing the activity, the different measures of the results of the questionnaire, as well as the comments obtained in the interviews, indicate that the participants as a group were satisfied with the activity in general, a finding that coincides with the earlier studies reported above. Although a number of students tend to dislike doing logs, most students find it beneficial for their learning experience. This positive view on the part of students, along with the benefits the activity provides them in learning to learn in terms of increased awareness of strategies and greater autonomy, as they themselves admit, is good reason to consider using some form of learning logs in foreign language classes. At the same time, teachers who offer a variety of options can cater to different types of learners with different preferences. In fact, in the following academic year, a combination of log activities were assigned in the language course; students did a log for three weeks and the following week they wrote a reflection on the month's work. While the effects of this change were not investigated, the students appeared to appreciate the variety.

Nevertheless, the high incidence of students who indicated that the logs were tedious and demotivating cannot be ignored as motivation is an important factor in language learning (Dörnyei, 2001). One explanation for these feelings may be the fact that the students who are accepted into this degree program have higher marks upon entry than those starting other programs such as Primary School Education or English Studies, as mentioned above in section 4.1. Hence, they tend to feel prepared in terms of study habits and have the impression that their language level is higher than it actually is. These students can be challenged with other requirements, such as research into learning strategies, or they can be given breaks from the learning log activity throughout the semester in order to defuse any potential fatigue or demotivation from the exercise. The students' own suggestion of making the activity voluntary is another option.

7. Conclusion

The first result worthy of note was the extremely low number of students who opted to write a weekly summary as opposed to filling out a weekly table and the fact that no students wrote a summary of research into learning strategies. The students interviewed revealed a number of reasons related to metacognitive strategies for learning (Oxford, 2011) in opting to do the daily log, such as it helped them focus more and it required them to do something every day with the target language. The students who decided to do a weekly summary instead of the daily log table felt that it was easier to do a summary or they preferred practicing writing, among other reasons. Allowing for different options is a way of catering to different learning styles and preferences (Felder & Henriques, 1995), and this can be expected to lead to student motivation to complete assignments.

A second finding of this study worth highlighting is the overall positive response to the activity. While a segment of the population was clearly unhappy with the exercise, and this fact cannot be ignored, the general attitude of the students was positive and in some cases highly positive. In addition, the students recognized to varying degrees that the activity had helped them in three aspects of learner autonomy reflected in the course objectives: increased independence while working with English outside class, greater self-awareness about learning habits, and discovery of new ways to work with the language, suggesting that the exercise had a motivating effect on them to seek out new learning strategies in the broad sense of the word. These findings were echoed in the answers to the open questions of the questionnaire and are a strong reason to consider using learning logs in foreign language classes.

While the students who were not happy with the activity were the minority, their attitude and comments are worthy of consideration, particularly because some of them indicated that doing a log was demotivating or they did not learn anything new from doing it. The main complaint –even from students who were positive about the experience– was that they found the log "tedious" and "time consuming" to do. This segment of the population needs to be considered in assigning the log activity in future academic years, and offering a variety of options may prove to be the best route for accommodating learners of different styles and preferences. The students'

suggestions of making the activity voluntary or requiring it to be done fewer weeks are also valid solutions.

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APPENDIX 1 – Learning log table facilitated to students

Student log – Week _____   Name _____

Date	Area	Objective	Activity	Comments/Goals

APPENDIX 2- Learning strategies discovery activities

Each student must complete one of the following activities between now and the end of the semester. The objectives, as discussed in class and in the course guide (syllabus), are to enable the student to better understand himself/herself as a language learner, to assist the learner in discovering ways of monitoring language learning, and to increase learner autonomy. All of the pages of the activity must be submitted on the last day of class in December so that the finished activity can be evaluated according to the rubric provided in class.

Option 1
Fill in the log table for each week of class. Indicate the area of language you have worked on, your objective in doing the activity, the actual activity done that day and any comments about your impressions after you finish.

Option 2
Write a summary (in prose) of the work completed each week to learn/progress in English. In this case, the weekly summary should be approximately one page long and it should include the following information: the learning objective(s) for the week and the activities done (paragraph 1), a description of the strategies attempted (paragraph 2), and an overall impression of what worked and what did not, along with plans for the following week (paragraph 3).

Option 3
Students who follow this option will need to investigate language learning strategies reported on internet and in the library (there are books for language teachers at the CRAI), and then summarize them and provide reasoned reflections on whether they think the strategies would work for them. In this case, the 1-2 page reports should have the following elements: 1) an overall focus that is stated, such as strategies for reading or writing better; 2) a clear summary of the strategies (use your own words or use direct quotations and indicate where the strategies have been found

in a reference list at the end); and 3) your own reflections on your impression of the strategies. If you have tried them at some point during the course or at another point in your life, this should be indicated along with your impression. Three to four strategies should be reported per week. The reports will be evaluated using the rubric but focusing on points 5, 6, and 7.

Option 4
Students can suggest another way of completing the overall objectives listed above and in the course guide. These suggestions should be proposed briefly in writing to the professor and approval must be obtained before work can be started on this option.

APPENDIX 3 – End-of-semester Questionnaire (English translation from Spanish)

Please answer the following questions on the logs completed for this course so that the instructor can improve the activity for future students. Thank you very much. Your answers are much appreciated.

  A) Indicate on a scale of 1 to 10 your satisfaction with the activity of doing a learning log. A score of 1 means that you were not satisfied at all with it, while a 10 means that you were very happy with it.
  B) Indicate whether you agree with the following statements or not:

	The learning log helped me to be more independent in studying/improving my level of English.	Yes	No
B	The log has helped me to discover new ways to study/improve/practice English.	Yes	No
C	The log has helped me to better understand how I study/improve my level of the foreign language.	Yes	No

  C) If you would like to make any clarifications about the logs and the three statements in the table above, please do so below.
  D) At the Department of Modern Languages we would like to help you to become more autonomous in learning/improving your level of English. How could this activity be improved in order to reach this objective?

APPENDIX 4 Interview questions (English version)

1. Why did you decide to do a weekly summary?
2. Why did you decide to do the weekly log table?